



Gov. Rick Perry: Rhetoric, Record on Immigration

Of the four border states (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California), Texas presides over more than half of the nation's international border with Mexico: 1,254 miles of the Rio Grande River. Though the other three states have their fair share of serious immigration problems, Texas — by its sheer size — has the lion's share.

For the record, the Governor's website gives his position on [border security](#): "There can be no homeland security without border security, and there can be no higher priority than protecting our citizens."

Perry's quote continues:

"... Violence is only part of the destruction that can result from a porous border. The free flow of drugs, weapons and people resulting from inadequate security can undercut economic development, education and trade. As such, they can hurt Texas families in every way imaginable, from loss of jobs to the loss of family members to addiction, imprisonment or death.... Border security is a federal responsibility but a Texas problem."

But potential voters are noticing that in 2001 the same Governor who noted on his website that the "free flow of drugs, weapons and people across the border ... can undercut economic development, education and trade" signed a state immigration law known as the Texas DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act. Through this action, Texas became the [first state to pass an in-state tuition](#) law.

During a border summit that same year Perry stated,

We must say to every Texas child learning in a Texas classroom, "We don't care where you come from, but where you are going, and we are going to do everything we can to help you get there." And that vision must include the children of undocumented workers. That's why Texas took the national lead in allowing such deserving young minds to attend a Texas college at a resident rate. Those young minds are a part of a new generation of leaders[;] the doors of higher education must be open to them. The message is simple: *educacion es el futuro, y si se puede* [education is the future, and yes, we can].

But many Texans are asking what could undercut economic development and education more than giving a resident tuition rate to illegal immigrants, diverting resources from resident taxpayers, when such rates are denied to American students from other states?

Joe Gomez for Houston radio station *KTRH* observed, "The bill signed into law in 2001 allows illegal immigrants to get [in-state tuition](#) so long as they intend to apply for permanent residency, but who's checking to make sure they go through with the process?"

Perry's critics note that though he has said he opposes Obama's "amnesty" plan, and gives voice to border security, he has permitted so-called "[sanctuary cities](#)" in Texas — and in this year's state



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on August 2, 2011

legislative session, allowed a bill to die which would have outlawed these cities. According to Wikipedia, there are 31 such cities in the United States, and the term (which has no legal meaning) "generally refers to cities which do not allow the use of municipal funds to enforce federal immigration laws." In practice, it means that police or municipal employees are not allowed to inquire about a person's immigration status, which is a violation of federal law.

Despite rhetoric that it is "dead," Perry [continues to promote and implement](#) the Trans Texas Corridor (TTC) project, though it is wildly unpopular with Texans. Many of his constituents are wondering how his stance as a border hawk can be reconciled with his desire for a [trade corridor](#) that will effectively dissolve the international border, ease border restrictions, compromise security, promote contraband shipments, and facilitate a regional government (the North American Union). They point out that it's impossible to have border security and open borders at the same time.

About the connection between immigration and border security, Perry has [declared](#),

We need to, as a country, address border security before we tackle any immigration issues. Absolutely, immigration issues need to be addressed but before you can do that you have to go to the root of the issue which is ultimately border security. Until you secure that border, you've got a porous border where it's almost pointless to address immigration reform. We can have a conversation, but until it can be implemented effectively we need to address border security and both of those responsibilities lie with the federal government.

In another move, Perry has decided that Arizona-style immigration law [wouldn't do for Texas](#). "I fully recognize and support a state's right and obligation to protect its citizens, but I have concerns with portions of the law passed in Arizona and believe it would not be the right direction for Texas," he said in a written statement, in spite of the fact that the Grand Canyon State's measure is widely acclaimed in Texas. He added,

For example, some aspects of the law turn law enforcement officers into immigration officials by requiring them to determine immigration status during any lawful contact with a suspected alien, taking them away from their existing law enforcement duties, which are critical to keeping citizens safe.

Some observers have suggested that Perry's lax policy on immigration may be a bow to his many important construction-industry donors — donors who depend heavily on the illegal-immigrant workforce in order to conduct business.

Photo: Gov. Rick Perry



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